

La Vigna

APRIL

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1992

JOHN ELMER ANTHONY, SR. 1929-1992

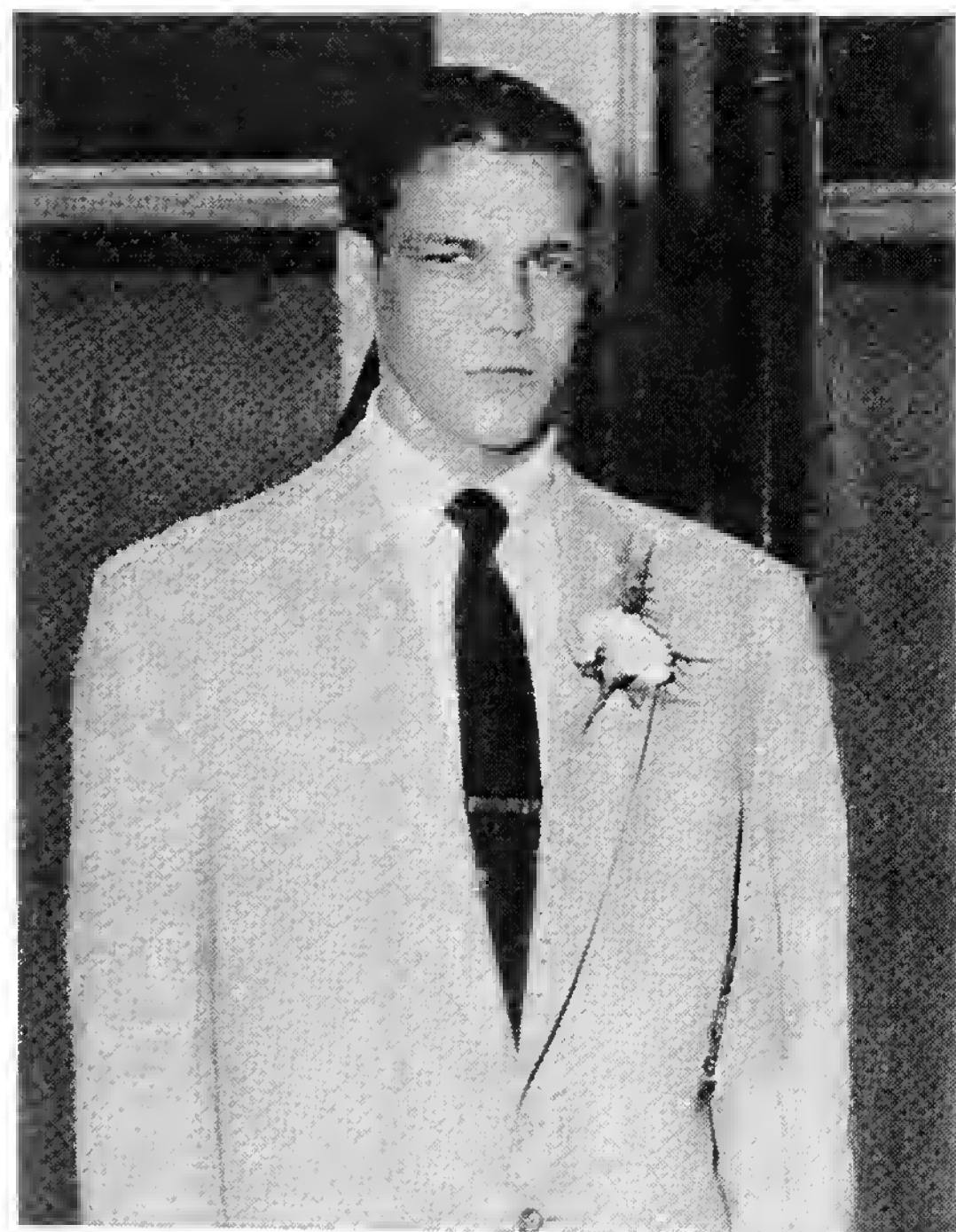
UNCLE JACK

by Frannie

Where was that place? Off the road. We walked back to a large pond. Or was it a small lake? There were no houses. We stood alone. Between water and sky. A young man. A small boy. Casting. "When you see the float jiggle, you've got something. Reel it in."

Sure enough. Fifteen times that summer afternoon I reeled it in, unhooked the flopping sunny's lip, put the fish in the bucket, wove the hook thru another worm, and recast. Once I hooked my finger. He had warned me. Afraid, I didn't want him to know. "Here, let me see that." Gently, he worked the barbed point from my flesh. Without another word, silently, we continued. It was the 1950's.

(Continued on next page.)



LA VIGNA READERS RESPOND

The initial response of LaVigna readers to the financial plight of our family newspaper (see p.6 of Christmas 1991 issue) assures publication of 1 or 2 additional issues.

Those who responded with contributions included Pat&Jane Chianese, Terence&Willie Bilancio, Lilia&Bud Sciscio, Mickey Chianese, Ottilio Bilancio, Angelo Chianese, Anthony Chianese and Fran&Angelica Bilancio. Your attention is called to edited remarks that accompanied their respective donations that appear on page 3.

(Continued on page 3.)

NOTE FROM COPENHAGEN PETER AND CORINNE WEDDED

by Corinne Bilancio

It was almost as much of a surprise to us as it was to our families that Peter Schoning and I became husband and wife on February 15 in Vojens, Denmark. We had planned for a July wedding in the U.S., but the Danish immigration authorities had other ideas. When they denied me an extension of my residence in Denmark, they gave us 15 days to act--and so we did, by having a small wedding with our Danish family, 3 days before I was scheduled to become an illegal alien. In the end, we felt that the bureaucratic decree was silver-lined, giving us the inspiration for a wedding with our family in Denmark, in addition to the celebration we still plan to have stateside. (Continued on p. 6)

CYNTHIA ELAINE PAGE & MICHAEL JOSEPH CHIANESE
MARRIED ON MARCH 20, 1992, FLEMINGTON

MICK & CINDY

If any one feels left out about knowing about this marriage, join the club! They managed to plan the entire event without any family or friends finding out.

The ceremony was attended only by Cindy's mom Liz, sister Anita, Mickey's pop Tony and brother Chris. The quiet event took place in the Hunterdon County Courthouse in their hometown Flemington. After a few (hundred) photos Mick carried Cindy over the threshold at their home at 10 Fir Court to champagne, caviar and wedding marches. A quiet dinner at a small Italian restaurant (what else?), a nap and off to a honeymoon of five days in Disneyworld, Florida. Delta Airlines found out they were newlyweds and bumped them to First Class at no extra charge; their hotel also upgraded them to the Penthouse suite; and to top things off NASA launched a shuttle in their honor. They saw it from the balcony of their suite!

(See photo on page 2)

LA VIGNA FAMILY PICNIC - YOU ARE INVITED!

See details on page 7. Mark your calendar--
SUNDAY, JULY 19, 1992. 2:30 P.M. COME!!

90 EGGERTS CROSSING RD, LAWRENCEVILLE
RAIN OR SHINE -- JOIN THE FAMILY

Directions on page 7.

PICNIC PICNIC PICNIC PICNIC PICNIC

UNCLE JACK
(Continued)

Everything was quieter then. Dragonflies, tadpoles, frogs, snap dragons, minnows and milkweed. Raspberries, blackberries, Studebakers wheeling up dust on unpaved roads a horizon away.

We brought the catch to my Mom who cooked 'em up for supper. 1954 or so. I saw her and him walking towards the house from the mowed fields across the street I still wonder if they carved their initials into the white grey trunk of one of those beech trees back in the 112th Field Artillery woods.

Thin. Muscular. Ruggedly all American handsome. Strong nose. Vulnerable, melancholy eyes that could twinkle. Eyes, which I now know had seen Korea at war. Had seen death stalk a battlefield and make its choices. Eyes which had seen the pain of his perfect body torn.

But in 1954 none of that mattered to me. To be near him was all. To see his baby blue, knob on the steering wheel Ford pull into our cindered driveway, the beautiful Aunt Lorraine by his side, cigarettes rolled up in his T-shirt sleeve, tattoos on either forearm, a wave of dark hair with a DA in back. To hear that distinctive Uncle Jack voice.

I got to know him as we all did while spending Easters, Christmases, Picnics, Visits, Swimming, Tasks, Discussions, Rides, Dinners, Volley Ball, Horse Shoes, Ice Cream and Corn-on-the-Cob together. Yes, even cigarettes and beers as moments then years stole by us all.

At one of the Holiday dinners I was asked which I preferred, "Spaghetti or mashed potatoes?" I said, "Mashed potatoes." "He wants to be like Jack," my Aunt Lorraine cooed. I was embarrassed by her saying aloud what everybody knew.

Today I'm in the middle of where we were then and where I'm going. So many of us who animated my 1950's stage have taken our final bows. My Parents, Grand Parents. All my Great Aunts and Uncles. Aunt Dorothy, Uncle Leo, Uncle Nick, Uncle Ange. Others. And now my Uncle Jack. Jack Anthony. My Irish Uncle.

The sadness for me is that I hadn't seen him in ten or fifteen years. One year for each of those sunnies. To reminisce. Or write a new page. This soldier who meant so much to my boyhood and man image. Who knew us all, who all knew him.

Uncle Jack, I applaud you with cheers you will never hear, with a toast you will never taste, a rose you will not smell, a kiss you will not feel. A salute you will not see.

Gently I remember how he took my fearful hand and worked the barbed point free. Gently, quietly, I think of him by still waters. On the far side of the veil.



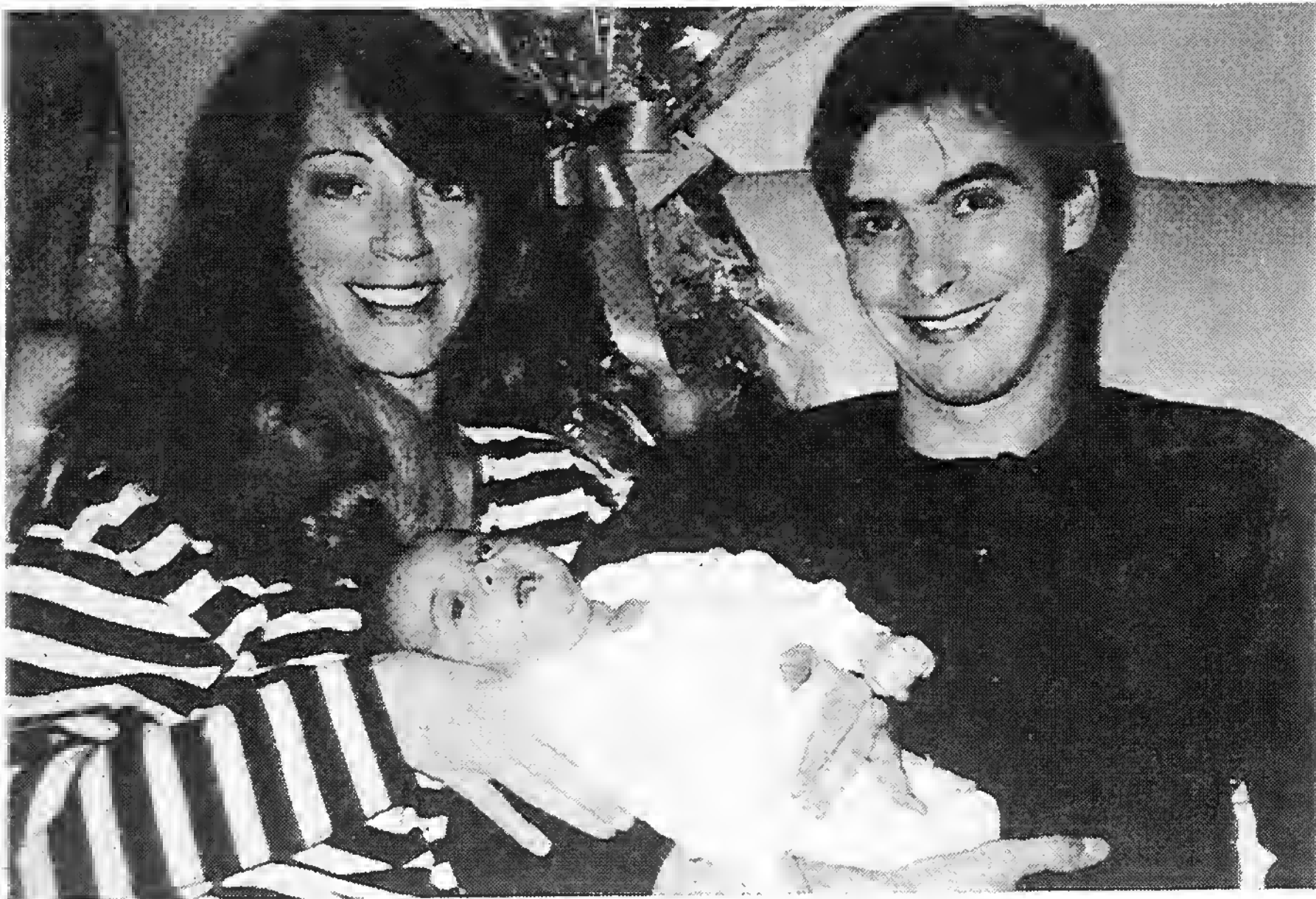
NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

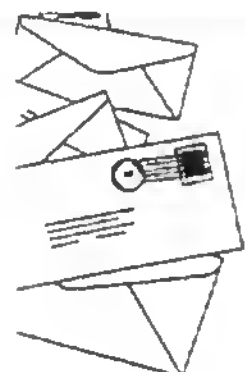
Clockwise from above:

Jonathan Andrew Spillers, born on the last day of 1991, with mother Jane (Bilancio) and father James.

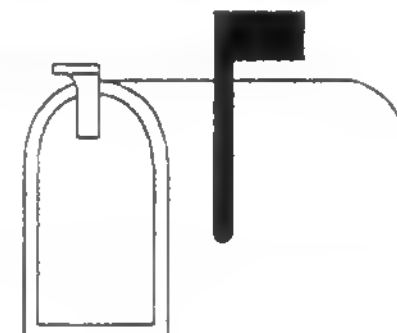
The newlywed Mr. and Mrs. Michael Chianese.

"Princess" Leah with parents Gloria and Ivan Bilancio.





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



What a joy to receive another LaVigna!! I read it cover to cover immediately! I loved every article. I even called my cousin Anthony Armenti just because I saw him on the Birthday list! I like the way you are trying new things with your layout. I like the way you are writing with a new spirit. As though there's a call for a new guard.

But what's this about "getting real"? (See December 1991 issue.) A call to "get real" is a call to abandon the highest ideals of our foremothers and fathers. "Get real" about what? Money? Articles? Participation? Forget it!!

Talk to me of history. Sing to me of idealism and dreams; speak to me of DaVinci, Michaelangelo, Pirandello, Belardo, Dante, Chianese, Pica, Migliaccio, Marone, Bilancio, Armenti, Gervasio, Melito, Casandrino. Tell me about the trees, the roads, the donkey, the spit in the dirt, the sweat on the brow, the tribulations, the Madonas, the myths, the magic of never never land. Tell me the color of the sun on the other side of yesterday. Tell me where the wind goes. Tell me why the sparrows still sing so sweetly when I visit Ermenia's with my Uncle Leo on Elmer Street in my mind's ear. Tell me again about love and life and dust and chewing tar and the peanut man and cleaning stables for a bread truck horse.

"Reality"? Who needs it? Certainly I don't read or participate in La Vigna for it. Leave reality to those who think they can define it!

As for me, I'll take the advise of my 1990 La Vigna:

Tutto Passa,	Everything passes,
Tutto vola,	Everything flies away,
Solo l'amor ci consola. Only love consoles us.	

And so it is with all my love I thank you and wish you continued success in the pursuit of the highest and most farfetched ideals you can imagine.

Enclosed you will find a modest contribution from my dear family.

Sincerely, Frannie (Bilancio)

I'm enclosing a check to help with the cost of producing La Vigna.

I look forward to receiving it every time and have a real sense of pride that the family has such a vehicle. The question of contributing written word is on my mind. I have an article written for spring about dandelions, but I have to find it. Meanwhile, I think I'll write another, to cover the commitment.

Your taking of the torch in this effort is very much appreciated. I hope the feeling of accomplishment you both might experience after an issue is on the streets carries us to the place where we can get the artistic contributions from more Chianeses.

Thank you X 1000.

Regards, Mick Chianese

Due to lack of space, the next issue (July 1992) will contain contributions from the Bilancios (Welcome back, Ottilio!) and Chianeses which could not fit in today's issue. Mail your news, article, picture by July 15. If you can not type, send hand-written material or bring it to the La Vigna picnic and give to Clora.

LA VIGNA READERS RESPOND (Continued from page 1)

La Vigna, an unusual family publication, first appeared eight years ago in 1984. To date a total of 27 issues have been produced by a coterie of volunteers who have met, consulted, sought out photos and cajoled articles, typed, laid out, prepared art work, pasted and prepared "boards" for duplication, delivered and picked up the finished work at the duplicating business, folded, addressed, applied stamps and finally delivered them to the post office in order that you might receive each issue as timely as possible.

Each issue of La Vigna, despite all the "volunteer" work costs about \$200.

G.I. LEW BECOMES A GERMAN SPY

After completing Occupational Police training at the Provost Marshal General School in Fort Custer, Michigan, I was sent on April 30, 1943, to the University of Illinois under the Army Special Training Program.

Here under Dr. Kahane I studied the Italian railroad system looking for bottlenecks and strategic points. One very important junction, I discovered, was in a little town south of Naples call Battipaglia. This discovery turned out to be one of the strange coincidences of my life.

At Battipaglia the main rail trunkline from Sicily crossed a stream. Here a spur from Bari joined the track from Sicily and the electricity changed from the direct current in the south to the alternating system used in northern Italy. Locomotives had to be switched and large transformers, rectifiers and other electric equipment were here.

The research was almost complete when I was sent to Africa, on my way to Italy. The research materials consisted of outlines, citations, a card file of sources, photocopies of important articles (many in German), maps showing the rail network and some completed chapters including the one on Battipaglia.

In Africa I was assigned to the Provost Marshal General section of the Allied Military Government for Italy. Since I would rather be in the police I kept quiet about the railroads, but the pile of research materials was burdensome.

Some Italian P.O.W.'s in Africa gave me letters to deliver in Italy if I ever had the chance. One was for a family in Battipaglia.

In January 1944 our unit landed in Taranto, and shortly afterwards we went by truck to Vico Equense on the Sorrentine coast. On the way there was a stop just outside of Battipaglia. Battipaglia, however, no longer existed. There were only piles of building stones and bomb craters. It had been carpetbombed by orders of General Clark in October 1943, even while I was researching it at the University of Illinois. Many of the villagers had been buried under the rubble.

The ruins had been picked over many times but I could still smell rotting flesh. No one knew anything about the family I was seeking. There was not much time, so I left the letter with a native of Montecorvino, a neighboring village. What a sad reception that P.O.W. must have received when he finally arrived home.

Several months later I was in the 337 Engineers bivouacked by the town of Francolise. (For the in-between adventures see previous issues of LaVigna.) On my days off I would hitch-hike to Casandrino where by now everyone knew me, and where I unburdened myself of my research materials. I left them at the home of Maria Rosa Bilancio, the same building where my father and his brothers and sisters were born many years ago.

Getting there was far easier than today. All traffic was military and the very first vehicle would pick you up. I would travel down Via Appia Nuova to the Giugliano columns from which I walked about a mile to Casandrino.

One day during this walk a paesano spading in the fields called out to me, "Lew, be careful, they have discovered you." I stopped to find out what he was talking about.

There had been a dragnet of Casandrino where the MP's had picked up all kinds of contraband. During the search they found my materials on the Italian railroads--and they interrogated Maria Rosa who explained that she didn't know anything about the Italian railroads nor where I might be found.

The MP's had been taught that the Italian natives would often make believe that they didn't know anything even when they knew a lot. So Maria Rosa, who was illiterate, was being held at the MP station at Grumo, the next village.

Upon hearing this I rushed to Grumo to tell them what a stupid mistake they had made. I told the sergeant at the desk that I wanted to talk to the Commanding Officer. The Sergeant looked at my papers, confirmed my identity and took them into the next room, where the C.O. was located.

Through the slightly open door, I could see a pair of crossed boots on the desk next to a half-full bottle of wine. There was some whispering, but the boots never moved.

Suddenly two MP's came out of a side door, hustled me into a jeep and an hour later the steel door of the holding cell at the questura in Naples banged behind me.

Lew Bilancio

("In the Questura" will appear in a following issue.)

ROBERTA IMMORDINO GARCIA VISITS FAMILY

Roberta Immordino Garcia paid a short visit to her parents and sister Carolyn recently. She has submitted this item for La Vigna. The California visitor who divided her one week between New Jersey and Connecticut regrets her inability to contact other family members.

GRANDPARENTS -- A SPECIAL BREED

7 p.m.

"Mama, I think I want to sleep with Grandma and Grandpa", my 5 year old son Robert informs me as we begin the ritual of going to bed. It is the day we have arrived in New Jersey from California. He eyes their bed with interest.

"All right?" I ask incredulously.

"Yep!"

I suddenly remember how warm and toasty it was in their bed as a child, squeezing in with them early on a Sunday morning--the cold floor a sharp contrast to their body warmth.

"Are you sure?" I wonder outloud, trying to dissuade him, concerned for my parents' comfort and knowing Robert's ability to touch every part of the bed while sleeping.

"Yes!" he answers confidently.

"Go tell them," I challenge him, planning my own uninterrupted night's sleep with glee.

"Grandpa, can I sleep with you and Grandma tonight?" My father's eyes light up as they peer over the newspaper.

"Grandma, I want to sleep with you and Grandpa tonight."

"When?" my mother queries, turning away from the dirty dinner dishes at the sink.

"Right now!" I yell, snickering with my potential freedom.

Grandparents--a special breed. I watch my father and mother suspend everything--all their own activities and use the next 30 minutes to get ready for bed: night gown and pj's on, vitamins taken, teeth brushed, heat turned down, bed made ready. Robert drags his pillow into the middle of the bed, placing it carefully between the other two. He snuggles down deep under the covers, only his head visible, his eyes brightly curious in the dim light of the room. My parents pad about in their slippers, sneaking a glance at him, laughing with anticipation.

8 p.m.

Lights going out one by one.

"Mama?"

"Yes?"

"Can I tell you something?"

I lean over the bed.

"I think I changed my mind."

7 days later.

Robert and I get up at 6:30 a.m. and squeeze into bed with Grandma and Grandpa.

"I can't believe this," Robert chuckles. "Is there room for Dad?" My husband is still asleep. I am envious.

A short time later, Grandma and I roll out of bed, thinking of breakfast and other daily realities.

Grandpa stays--Robert snuggling in close. They talk. They laugh. They watch TV together. It's warm and toasty between the sheets. Side by side. Heart to heart.

"Don't go, Grandpa," Robert pleads.

"Don't go," and he wraps his small arm around my Dad's larger one in a permanent embrace.

Roberta Immordino
28 March 1992

(continued from page 1)

Corinne Bilancio & Peter Schøning, Tåsingevej 41, 4 th., DK-2100
Copenhagen Ø, Denmark.

[illegible]

I think I will stop for this time. I don't want to hog up the whole paper. I do want to have all of you know that I love you and appreciate how nice you've all been to me all these years.



Photo from Ann's wallet:
JANE & PAT CHIANESE WED

LA VIGNA FAMILY PICNIC - SUNDAY, JULY 19, 1992 -- 90 EGGERTS CROSSING RD.

We had a wonderful time last year! Let's do it again - you are invited! Sunday, July 19, 1992--come and enjoy your family. We'll have a better time with you and your family. Mark it on your calendar now. Be here on Sunday, July 19, 2:30 or as soon as you can get here--in case you have to work, come right from work. We'll all be glad to see you.)

Quoits, volleyball and bocce are available. Bring a game that you'd like to share. Weather permitting, there will be a fire/grill hot & ready.

Bring a beverage for yourself(s) and bring a covered dish or dessert for about 10 people to share with everyone. Feel free to bring lawn chairs or blankets, a musical instrument; feel comfortable. Bring your camera and enjoy the day.

Last year we enjoyed home videos. We'd (I know I would) love to see them again. Bring your photos or videos of family. Video player and monitor will be provided at the picnic.

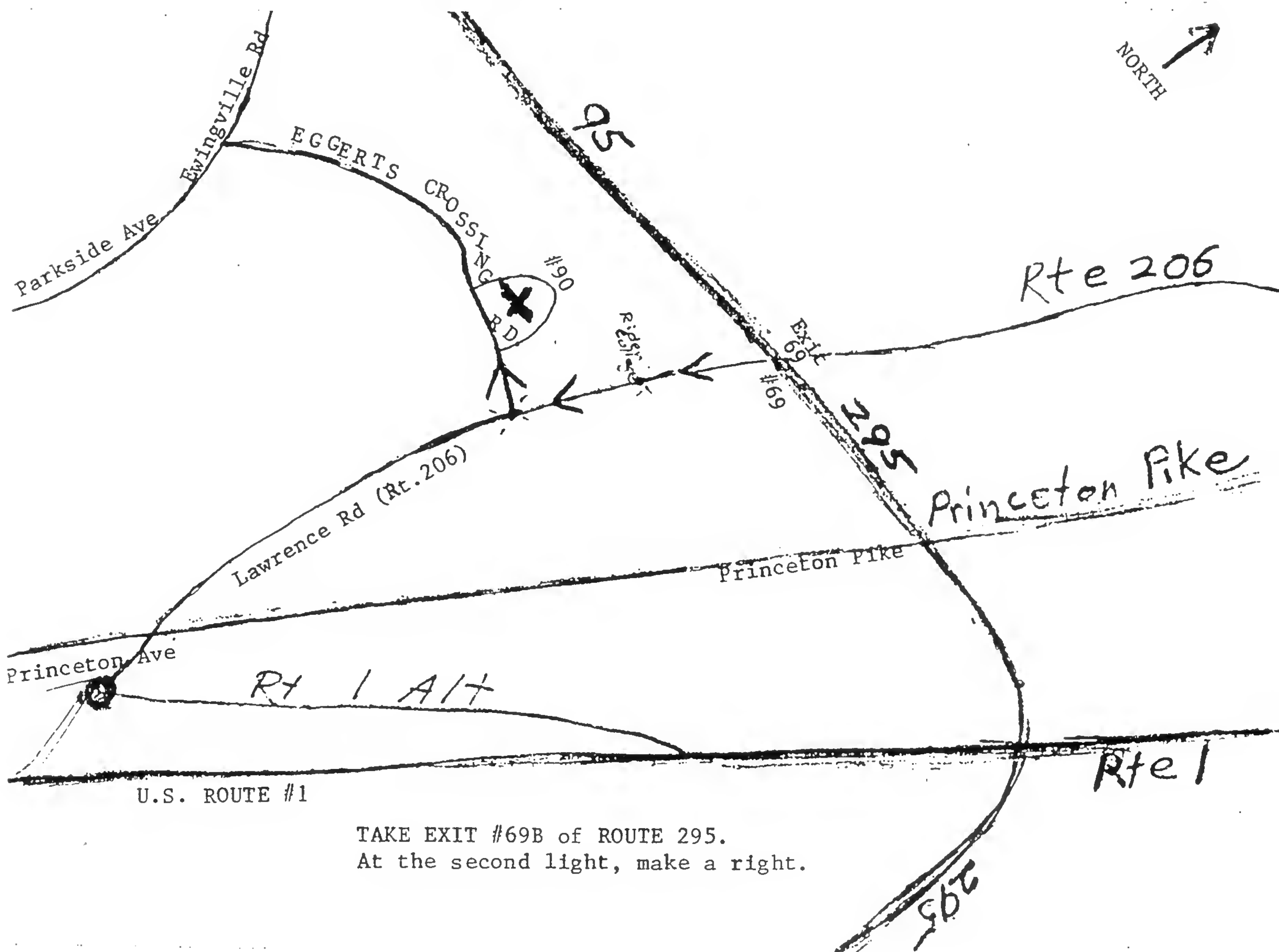
We hope you will arrive before 3 p.m. so the food can be spread out and dinner can be enjoyed together.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call Clora--609)882-2448

DIRECTIONS

Interstate 295 exit #69B onto Route 206 South. At second light make a right onto Eggerts Crossing Road. About 4th house on the right side, immediately after the entrance sign for Lawrence Intermediate School; a brown & white house.

Feel free to use parking lots at the Intermediate Shool (in back of house) or at the Federal USP&FO (across the street).



SUNDAY, JULY 19 - 2:30 p.m. - 90 EGGERTS CROSSING ROAD - 609)882-2448

LA CUCINA

If one lives in Vermont, one ultimately becomes a Jack of All Trades. This happens out of sheer necessity. Due to the severity and early arrival of winter, all businesses which provide outdoor employment must scale down. This is a way of life. Having worked in the construction field, I was directly affected. More often than not the result was a five month layoff. So the search for work was on since I had to make ends meet.

Eventually I was offered employment as a prep cook at a quaint little restaurant named the Crown and Anchor. Coincidentally, my wife Sandie had more than a little to do with this offer. With five seasons under her belt, she had some clout and used it. During our time there we acquired many simple but delicious recipes. I would like now to share one of my favorites with you.

Dominic Gervasio

CROWN AND ANCHOR CHEESECAKE

Mix together: 1 1/4 cup sugar
4 (8 oz) packages of cream cheese
(soften in a warm oven)

Beat in: 5 eggs (one at a time)
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups (16 oz) sour cream

Mix well, then place in well greased 10" spring form pan. (grease with butter)

Preheat oven to 325 and bake 50-70 minutes (until center is firm)

Turn off oven and prop open oven doors with 2 potholders.
**Leave in oven for 2 hours to cool. Then chill and serve.

LA VIGNA
90 EGGERTS CROSSING ROAD
LAWRENCEVILLE NJ 08648

REMEMBER: PICNIC JULY 19